

**Introduction:**

For this activity, participants will learn how to define and identify features of low and high power distance through a case study and reflect on how their own relation to authority plays out. To explore their understanding of power distance, participants will engage in group and small group discussion.

**Objectives:**

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Define the value dimension of power distance.
2. Recognize features of low and high power distance in communication.
3. Reflect on their own perspectives on authority.

**Time:**

30 minutes.

**Group Size:**

Small Group.

**Materials:**

Handout and Phone Chat (both in [Downloads](#)).

**Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:**

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

**AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:**

Cultural Self-Awareness:

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

Knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks:

- To demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs & practices.

Verbal and nonverbal communication:

- To articulate a complex understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., demonstrates understanding of the degree to which people use physical contact while communicating in different cultures or use direct/indirect and explicit/implicit meanings).
- To skillfully negotiate a shared understanding based on these differences.

### **Other Skills:**

Teamwork; Mentorship & Leadership.

### **Activity Instructions:**

1. Introduce the group to the concept of power distance (see definition in Handout or use a video from YouTube).
2. Distribute and review the Handout.
3. Divide the larger group into groups of 3-4 participants and ask them to discuss the questions on the Handout (15 minutes).
4. Bring group back together. Ask:
  - In the case study, who did your group determine comes from the perspective of high power distance? Low power distance?
  - In terms of power distance, where are you on the continuum? Do you always operate with the same perspective in every situation? Explain.
  - Where do you think you developed your understanding of power distance?
  - How might different understandings of power distance lead to conflict? Provide examples if you can think of any.
  - What are some things you can do when there are different understandings of power distance in your group or team? (If needed, consider explaining where your own understanding of authority comes from and inviting group/team members to do the same, introducing the concept of power distance and inviting a discussion of different understandings without judging, adjusting one's own behavior to align more with that of other team members, and managing "up" or "down" if in a leadership role.)
  - What did you learn through today's activity, and how will you apply it?